

March 16, 2009

Dear Members of the GAE Committee:

As a voting constituent and taxpayer from Bridgeport I would like to ask the Committee to:

- reinstate funding for Children's Trust Fund and through it, the Parent Trust Fund;
- keep the Commission on Children as a dedicated arm of the legislature; and
- **oppose the Governor's Bill No. 840.**

In tough economic times, programs that teach advocacy and promote parental involvement are especially valuable. They are low cost investments but return a great deal for many years to come by positively impacting multiple generations as well as children's programs and policies.

Last year, my wife and I completed the Parent Leadership Training Institute program and our children completed the Children's Leadership Training Institute program in Bridgeport. These family civic initiatives are both designed and supported by the Commission on Children on behalf of the General Assembly. Connecticut is the only state in the nation that publically funds family civic initiatives with a public-private funding partnership that leverages cash and in-kind funds through the Parent Trust Fund.

We use the training we received weekly if not daily. There are hundreds like us being trained each year in a dozen communities across this state. Once the training is done we

are out there working in neighborhoods, schools and communities and really making a difference.

The Children's Trust Fund and the Commission on Children do great work helping at risk children and promoting positive roles for children. Once children are shown that they are valued and can have a positive role in society you can change their path forever.

Funding for prevention programs are important at all times but especially now when the budget is tight. Studies show that it is more cost effective to prevent problems with youth than to correct them in the future. It also sends a message to our youth and parents that they are valuable to us.

Please oppose Governor's Bill 840. Thank you for your time.

John Wilkins, Bridgeport Connecticut